
In Britain, the UK's largest airport company, BAA, may have to sell off three of its operations. A report by the Competition Commission says there are significant problems arising from BAA's ownership of seven airports. Andrew Walker reports:

BAA's airports **handle** 90% of air passengers in the South East of England and 60% for the UK as a whole. The company owns all three of the largest airports for the London area, including Heathrow which handles more international passengers than any other airport in the world, many of them transfer passengers only changing flights at the airport.

A British business regulatory authority, the Competition Commission, has **reached a provisional view** that the company should have to sell two of those London airports. It also wants the company **to part with** one of the two leading airports it owns in Scotland - Glasgow or Edinburgh.

The Commission says that **the lack of competition** has led to a lack of **airport capacity**, higher charges for users, the slow development of new routes and poor responses to customers' requests. The report says that, especially **in the longer term**, the airports would be likely to compete more **vigorously** if they **were separately owned**.

The report has been welcomed by a number of airlines. But BAA's chief executive said the analysis was **flawed** and the measures proposed were **disproportionate and counter-productive**.

Andrew Walker, BBC

Vocabulary and definitions

handle	deal with, take care of, are responsible for
reached a provisional view	come to a conclusion that is not yet final
to part with	to give up, to stop being the owner of
the lack of competition	here, the fact that there are no other companies that could provide services similar to BAA and would try to perform better than BAA
airport capacity	the number of passengers, baggage items and planes that an airport can handle
in the longer term	far into the future
vigorously	actively, with a lot of energy
were separately owned	did not all belong to one and the same company
flawed	inaccurate, with mistakes, leading to wrong conclusions
disproportionate and counter-productive	too radical and not leading to positive results

More on this story: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7571613.stm>

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2008/08/080820_baa.shtml